

Planning Committee

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More and more applications are being made for Change of Use (COU) to Town Centre properties. We continue to make comments that, in general, support a COU rather than see a building become a derelict eyesore, however, we strive to seek quality conversions. Sadly many are for sub-standard flats and Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO's) that we strongly oppose. I cover this subject elsewhere in my report.

Dover Western Docks Revival (DWDR)

A date to remember 3rd May 2019 at 4pm. This is when the new Marina Pier opened to the public. Early community comments are positive regarding the structure but of concern is Dover Harbour Board has not restricted cycling or skateboarding and this is causing problems for those taking a walk. It is hoped that some seating will also be provided at a future date.

The marina cut is almost completed, and the design will enhance the safety from tidal flooding. The bascule bridge is also complete.

Part of the facilities within the cargo area is a berth that will accommodate "Port of Call" cruise ships, this berth classified as "Berth C". This will enable up to three large cruise ships to be handled at any one time at the "Western Docks".

It will be interesting to see if this berth is first used on the 9th July as Hapag Lloyds MV Europa is scheduled to use berth "C". Three ships were originally to use the port on this date but now only two are shown as calling at Dover on this date.

After this date the next occasion when three ships are scheduled is the 30th July with the Aidaaura on "C" berth and Viking Jupiter on CT1 with Pacific Princess on CT2. We wish this new facility all good wishes for the future in order to attract more cruise ships to Dover.

DTIZ (St James Development)

Now over one year since opening. Still eight units available (4 retail and 4 catering) although still one retail and one catering "under offer" for the last six months. During the planning process we emphasized the need for good quality landscaping, as landscaping had been considerably reduced possibly to reduce the overall cost of the project. The very limited landscaping is far from satisfactory as maintenance is neglected, we hope this will improve in the future.

Castle Street/Biggin Street

Planning applications continue for properties from "commercial" to "residential". One application (re 13 Castle Street) made application for COU last year for two residential units and has now re-submitted for FIVE rooms (possibly 10+ occupants) as a HMO. Experience has shown many badly managed HMO's create anti-social behaviour and with only one small kitchen for all residents a higher level of rubbish due to relying on take-aways.

It is recognized Castle Street has a very high visitor footfall and photos are taken from the Market Square towards the Castle. As such we consider this application with HMO facilities is not desirable. It should be noted in close proximity there are already

15 HMO properties capable of housing up to 227 occupants. We have strongly objected and since we have made the local community aware 15 members of the public have also objected.

Conservation Areas

Comments to DDC by both Planning and Refurbishment Committees continue in the attempt to visually improve these important areas.

Section 215 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Enforcement

Thank you for the positive comments to me following the article on this subject in the March newsletter.

Farthingloe and Western Heights

Current plans show very little variation to those previously submitted. We recognize the heritage benefits to the Western Heights but are concerned as to the volume of housing in Farthingloe despite some improved landscaping. As such we remain unable to totally support this application.

Connaught Barracks Developments

A "Hybrid" application that in effect is outline planning for up to 300 dwellings. Phasing of development, and details of a new road junction from the development (and Guston) onto the A258. It would appear some blocks of flats could be up to five storeys in height and not suitable in close proximity to the castle. The opportunity for high quality "market housing" seems to have been missed on this panoramic site with views of the castle and English Channel.

Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO's)

I have alluded to some of the problems these create if not well managed. Those with "bonafide" organisations such as Porchlight, that have 24/7 supervision, in

general have few problems. It is those that are managed by Agents that are not on the property that are the most problematic.

Latest statistics by DDC confirm that now ALL wards in Dover are within the top 20% of deprived wards in England. The lack of planning control has to be a major contributor and sadly reflects the failure of DDC to deliver its statement contained in the 2010 Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework "Have no areas falling within the 20% of those most deprived in England".

Within the District there are 47 licensed HMO premises of which 41 (87%) are in Dover. The total permitted HMO occupants in the District being 510 with 91% (465) in Dover.

It has long been reported in respect of HMO problems in Thanet. Thanet District Council for several years has restricted the granting of HMO's. We have sought similar restrictions in Dover as "absent" landlords now see Dover as a soft touch to exploit private sector housing.

The Socio-economic profile of Dover has considerably declined and is restrictive to quality inward development within the town.

Of interest is the comments made by one member of the public in respect to the 13 Castle Street HMO application. "Margate with a population of 58,000 and 20 HMOs compared to Dover 41 HMO's and a population 30,000"

Let us all hope Dover District Council start to take control of this problem and deliver the Local Development Framework statement to have no areas within the 20% of those most deprived in England.